# ANCIENT SKIES

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## Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society

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### THE ACROPOLIS OF BAALBEK

BY ALAN F. ALFORD*

On May 28, 1995 two intrepid members of the Ancient Astronaut Society, Katharine Habot and I,left England for a seven day tour of Lebanon. As this country has been seldom visited during the last 20 years due to the war, I thought that Society members would be interested in sharing some of our experiences and observations of this beautiful and archaeologically important country. Our route took us directly from Beirut, on the Mediterranean Coast, to Baalbek, where we spent two nights, and from there to the Cedars of the Qadicha Valley, Tripoli,Byblos, Sidon, Tyre, Aanjar and Beit ed Dine. Prior to our trip we had found it difficult to obtain information on Lebanon. The Lebanese Tourist Office in London sent me the same leaflets that I already had from a school cruise in 1975, when we were diverted at the last minute due to the outbreak of the war! Nowadays tourism is beginning to recover slowly, which meant that we had the pleasure of exploring most of the sites in splendid isolation.

Our two hour taxi drive to Baalbek took us over Mount Lebanon and north-east through the Bekaa Plain a total distance of 85 kilometers. We encountered frequent military checkpoints, manned sometimes by Lebanese, sometimes by Syrian soldiers. Once we even passed a Hizbollah fund-raising collection for the ongoing armed struggle against Israeli occupation in the south of the country! By the time we reached Baalbek it was dark and nothing could be seen. After checking into the Palmyra Hotel, a mere stone throw from the site, we settled down with a glass of cold beer and waited impatiently for the sun to rise over one of the world's most exciting ancient sites.

The Acropolis of Baalbek is huge, and it takes some time, even with a map, to obtain a full appreciation of the ruins at this site, which reflect thousands of years of religious constructions and military fortifications. By way of comparison, it dwarfs the acropolis at Athens, and even its second largest temple exceeds the Parthenon in size. We, however, were more interested in the construction of megalithic stones beneath the "modern" ruins, in particular the stone platform on which the Temple of Jupiter was built by the Romans. In order to observe the well-known Trilithon (Fig. 1) in the south-west wall of the platform, one has to walk around the outside walls. The proximity of the perimeter fence makes it difficult to appreciate the full scale of the construction. These three stone blocks, also known as the "Marvel of the Three Stones", form the sixth visible layer of the wall and each measures approximately 64 x 14 x 12 feet. They are estimated to weigh a staggering 1,000 tons each!The angle of the photograph hardly does them justice.An even larger block, known as the "Stone of the South" lies in a hillside quarry,10 minutes brisk walk to the south-west. The scale of this stone slab, 69 feet long and estimated to weight around 1,200 tons, is all too obvious (Fig. 2), and there is no doubt that it has been purposefully cut out from the quarry with great accuracy. The accurate geometrical shape of the whole is clear to see but, upon close inspection, the individual edges and faces of the block do show some imperfections; these, however, can be attributed either to erosion over thousands of years or to a final dressing operation which was never completed. For it is clear that this slab is still attached at its base to the rock of the quarry, and the intention of the builders and the reason for its abandonment remain an intriguing mystery.

Much has been previously written on the subject of Baalbek, so I will restrict myself to only a few passing observations. First, the huge size of the stone blocks. How could the three stones of the Trilithon have been moved from the quarry? The distance in itself is not huge, only one-half kilometer from the quarry to the acropolis. Nor is the elevation itself an obstacle, since the quarry is at a similar height to the acropolis. However, when one considers the size and weight of these stones and the fact that the route from the quarry to the acropolis is not entirely flat, transportation via any conventional means seems impossible. It has been estimated that it would take the combined efforts of 40,000 men to move the "Stone of the South"(1). According to my own calculations, this 1,200 ton block is the equivalent of three Boeing 747 aircraft! (2). I have shown the photographs to my friends and colleagues, some of whom are engineers, and they too cannot believe how these stones could have been moved at all, yet somehow they were not only moved but also subsequently lifted 30 feet into the air and fitted together with great precision!

My engineer friends question why such large blocks of stone should have been used, when it could have been much easier to split the giant monoliths into several smaller blocks; they say that it is risky to use such large blocks because a vertical defect running lengthwise through the stone could subsequently cause a severe structural weakness.A similar fault in a smaller block would not affect the overall construction. They think that a platform constructed of smaller blocks would have been equally strong, although larger blocks would have provided a greater degree of stability.

What can we conclude from these observations? First, we can surmise that the builders must have been extremely confident of their material!Secondly, we can propose three reasons for using such large

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blocks: (a) that an unknown technology meant that size and weight were not a constraint, in which case the construction task would actually be quicker than if a smaller number of blocks were cut,moved and assembled; (b) that the platform was designed to withstand earthquake in an area which is particularly vulnerable (as evidenced by the heavy damage to the site by earthquakes in 1158, 1203, 1664 and 1759); (c) that the platform was designed to withstand enormous vertical forces, such as would occur with the descents and ascents of rocket-type vehicles.

The south-east wall of the platform is also very interesting. Here we find a row of nine blocks measuring approximately 33 x 14 x 10 feet each, or almost half the size of the stones in the Trilithon (Fig. 3). Some of these blocks taper outward at the bottom and their level in the platform appears to be the same as the level of the stones below the Trilithon in the adjoining south-west wall; in Fig. 1 we can see the latter stones which also taper outward - there are six such stones, which also measure about 33 feet long and about 14 feet in height. The significant fact, which is not readily apparent without a visit to Baalbek, is this - the Trilithon layer rises above any of the other "cyclopean" stones. This leads me to the inevitable conclusion also reached by other conventional researchers - that the gigantic platform of Baalbek was incomplete, and that the "Stone of the South" indicates a sudden abandonment of the project. However, I would add one further detail regarding the row of nine stone blocks forming the south-east wall. These blocks, although of similar size, are ill-matched; some are tapered, others are not, and the cut of the tapering does not match, even on adjacent blocks (Fig. 4). This is particularly unusual, and arouses my curiosity. Could it be that what we see today at Baalbek was an attempt to rebuild the platform using the undamaged stones from an earlier castastrophic event?

Magnificent as the Roman temples at Baalbek certainly are,they are composed of much smaller stones, and there is no evidence of any civilization having the technology to erect the colossal stones which we see in the platform.

Baalbek's geographical position also throws doubt on conventional explanations of the site. I had not appreciated until I visited Lebanon and studied a three-dimensional relief map of the country, that Baalbek is located so far to the east, virtually in the foothills of the Anti-Lebanon. It is also located close to the widest part of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range, and I cannot perceive how such a location would originally have been chosen for a commercial trade route in ancient times. Whilst it is true that Baalbek is amply watered by the springs of Ras-el-Ain one kilometer to the south-east, this had to be supplemented in Roman times by an aqueduct from Ain Lejouj six kilometers to the east, and it would have been far more sensible for ancient travellers to follow a trade route through the central, extremely fertile area of the Bekaa Plain. The location of Baalbek and its massive stone platform does not match the knowledge we have of the earliest civilizations in this region - they are anomalies which cannot be ignored.

Similarly we cannot ignore the documentary and archaeological evidence concerning the veneration of this site by successive Roman emperors. Why did they travel thousands of miles to Baalbek to receive oracles and to build the grandest of all their temples so far from Rome? What motivated them to ship red granite columns all the way from Aswan in Egypt to the port of Tripoli, and from there to transport them to Baalbek via Homs, a detour which, in order to circumnavigate the mountains, required a journey of around 200 kilometers? This was certainly a most inconvenient place to erect the greatest Roman temple in the world, and we must seek an impelling motive to undertake such a project. Only one such motive is apparent and is actually well-documented - the worship of the gods of that region - a triad of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury. The Romans associated Jupiter with Ba'al, after whom the site is named, but the Phoenician name "Ba'al" gives little away, simply meaning "lord, master". Ba'al is generally thought to be identical with the god Adad. Venus is identified with Astarte, also known as Ishtar, whilst Mercury is thought to represent the god Bacchus/Adonis.Research in the Middle East has uncovered a widespread worship of a triad consisting of Adad, Ishtar and Shamash (equivalent to the Sumerian Ishkur, Inanna and Utu).

In the "History of Baalbek" by Michel M. Alouf, kindly presented to us by the owner of the Palmyra Hotel, it states that "nowhere is it clearly stated to what cause the religious importance of this town ought to be attributed".This reflects the difficulty which conventional scholars face with accepting the reality of the gods who were worshipped by our ancient ancestors. It is interesting to note that a stone relief carving of the god Adad, one of the few items still on view in the National Museum of Beirut, shows him depicted with his two regular symbols - the thunderbolt in his left hand and an axe in his right hand. The meaning of Adad's Sumerian equivalent name, Ishkur, is "far mountain land" which could perfectly describe Lebanon; could the axe therefore signify the actual role of this god in physically building or rebuilding Baalbek?

What can the local legends tell us about the building of Baalbek? One legend has it that Cain, the son of Adam, built Baalbek as a place of refuge after his god Jehovah had cursed him; another that Cain built it in year 133 of the creation during a fit of raving madness! Other myths attribute Baalbek to the work of demons or giants. The Arabs believe that Baalbek is the place where Nimrod, the ruler of the region. rebelled against his god, and built the tower of Babel. Only on one point is there any consensus - that Baalbek is the most ancient building in the world. What can we conclude from this confusing jumble of mythology and legend? Perhaps simply that men have from time immemorial racked their brains to explain the same incredible sights that we ourselves have now seen with our own eyes!

Finally, what are we to make of the geometrical relationship between Baalbek, the pyramids of Giza and Mount St. Katherine, as identified by Zecharia Sitchin? (3). Sitchin concludes from this, and much other evidence, that these sites formed the three points of a triangular landing corridor designed by the "gods" to guide and land their craft at Baalbek following the Deluge. Hence the need for such a massive stone platform at Baalbek. I can confirm from our expedition that the ranges of Mount Lebanon to the west and the Anti-Lebanon to the east form an ideal corridor or flight path up through the Bekaa Plain towards Baalbek. (Photos on next page)

References:

(1) M.M. Alouf, History of Baalbek, 25th Ed. p101.
(2) A Boeing 747 weighs in at 337,840 kg.
(3) Z. Sitchin, The Stairway to Heaven, Avon Books, 1980, chapters IX and XIV.

[Ed.Note: The Russian scientist,Dr. Matest M. Agrest was probably the first to suggest that the Acropolis at Baalbek could have been used as a launch site in his Astronauts of Yore,published in Moscow in 1961.]

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Fig. 1. The "Trilithon" - the light colored course.

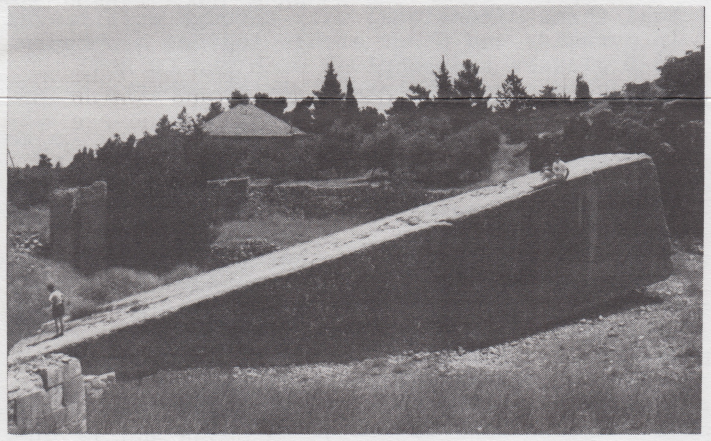

Fig. 2. The "Stone of the South".

Fig. 3. The course of nine huge blocks of stone.

Fig. 4. Detail showing tapering of the nine blocks.

## BOOK REVIEW: FINGERPRINTS OF THE GODS:

A Quest for the Beginning and the End
By Graham Hancock
Published by Heinemann, London 1995
ISBN 0 434 31336X

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In his earlier book, The Sign and The Seal, Graham Hancock described his search for the Ark of the Covenant in the churches of Ethiopia. That quest ended in anticlimax. After a long wild-goose-chase and much bribery, the author was finally refused admission to the building alleged to contain the original true Ark, and was forced to return home.

This book too ends in anticlimax - no firm conclusions are reached from the mass of excellently-researched material accumulated by the author. This is primarily concerned with the early advanced civilizations of Central and South America, and of Egypt, which the author firmly believes were built with the assistance of a technically-advanced culture from outside. Much of his evidence could have been lifted directly from the books of Erich von Daniken and other Ancient Astronaut Society authors, though there is no mention of their names. Only Robert Temple and his Sirius Mystery get a passing reference.

In spite of this cavalier attitude to the work of the Society, its members should not dismiss Hancock's work, for it contains a lot of new evidence directly supportive of the ancient astronaut hypothesis. I can mention the exquisite Ancient Egyptian vases which have been found, which can only have been turned from solid lumps of diorite or granite on an extremely advanced lathe. The vases include handles on the outside, and the insides have been hollowed out to almost transparent thinness. Even today, it would be very difficult to fabricate such superb works of art from single lumps of the very hard rocks that the Egyptians used. Maybe even some laser-type device would be needed.

Hancock's own theory is that the advanced civilization came originally from Antarctica, where it developed before a climate-change led to the formation of the ice-cap. It is well-established that the Antarctic continent (or archipelago as it would be without the ice) enjoyed a temperate climate up until about 10,000 BC. The theory is very convenient for the author, and difficult to refute because even if we could see down through the thousands of feet of ice, it is unlikely that any traces of this civilization would remain, having all been ground away by glacial action - or so it would be argued.

Hancock dismisses the ancient astronaut theory as preposterous, and so must place his advanced terrestrial civilization in the only place left that cannot be thoroughly explored. There are, however, certain difficulties with this which he does not address in the book. Some of these are:

- If this civilization was as advanced as, or superior to our own, why did it confine itself to Antarctica and not spread world-wide as ours has done?
- The civilizers of Egypt and the Americas are said to have been a few people who managed to get away before Antarctica was struck with cataclysm and glaciation almost overnight. It is hard to imagine that a few miserable groups of destitute refugees were responsible for building the massive works of Peru and the Egyptian pyramids, or that they managed to escape with cranes capable of lifting 600-ton stone blocks. If they built the cranes on site, where are the mines and factories, not to mention the cranes themselves?
- According to local legends and the archaeological evidence, the "gods" stayed awhile and then went home. Did they go back to ice-bound Antarctica? If so, what became of them and where are they now?

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- When the legends say that they went back to the sky, Hancock ignores this, though he is quick enough to seize on myths that support his theory and to take them as gospel.

There is excellent evidence given that the pyramids, the Sphinx, and certain other Egyptian works are far older than the dates ascribed to them by conventional Egyptologists. Hancock also claims that cataclysms such as shifting of the poles occur every few thousand years. If this is so, why are the pyramids still so exactly aligned with the points of the compass? He also cites variations in the level of Lake Titicaca as evidence for these catastrophic events, yet there are lakes in the Albania-Montenegro area of south-east Europe where the levels fluctuate by 100 feet or more seasonally. Titicaca's level could have been dropped by the spontaneous clearance of some blockage.

The book ends with an ancient Mayan prophecy for the date of the end of the world, when a massive slippage of the Earth's crust will put an end to civilization as we know it: "The day will be 4 Ahau 3 Kankin (corresponding to 23 December AD 2012), and it will be ruled by the Sun God, the ninth Lord of the Night. The Moon will be eight days old, and it will be the third lunation in a series of six...." This quotation is from Coe, Michael D., Breaking the Maya Code, Thames and Hudson 1992, p.275, according to the author's notes.

According to my astronomical software, there will be a new Moon on 13 December 2012 at about 0843 GMT, which makes the Moon ten days old on the 23rd. Nevertheless I will not be holding my breath on 23 December 2012 if I am still around at that date.

The pole-shifting is said to be triggered by build-ups of ice at or near the poles. If the Earth were a perfect sphere, this would be the case, and it would tumble until the ice-caps were on the new equator. But against this tendency, the massive fourteen-mile thick bulge of rock at the present equator more than compensates for the ice-caps of Greenland and Antarctica. There is no danger of the Earth's axis toppling, and if there were, some polar wandering would already be evident and the latitudes of places would be changing. This is not happening, as I know from observations with my satellite Global Positioning System and with traditional means.

Any such change could not be concealed from the public, as it would be known to all persons concerned with navigation; there is no reason whatever to start an end-of-the-world cult based on Fingerprints of the Gods.

Despite many misprints and much slapdash editing, this book is well worth study by Society members, since much of the evidence presented supports the ancient astronaut hypothesis far better than it does the author's own.

*Mr. Sassoon is co-author of The Manna Machine and The Kabbalah Decoded.

## AAS CD-ROM: "KONTAKT MIT DEM UNIVERSUM"
(Contact with the Universe)

The first CD-ROM compiling the results of Erich von Daniken's 30 years of research is now available to Society members in the German language only.

State-of-the-art computer techniques have made it possible: the breakthrough of a dream! Since Erich von Daniken published his first bestseller Chariots of the Gods? a quarter of a century ago, about 1000 publications from other authors dealing with the same subject have followed. But how would it be possible to combine all the theories, researches and facts, following the traces of the Astronaut-Gods, into one encyclopedia? Under the leadership of von Daniken and a team of skilled Ancient Astronaut Society members, Ulrich Dopatka has compiled all this information in a multi-media way on a single CD-ROM.

About 10 years ago Ulrich Dopatka, librarian and library automation consultant for the University of Bern in Switzerland, compiled the Lexikon der Pra-Astronautik (Dictionary of Pre-Astronautics), a guide from A to Z through the ancient astronaut theory. During the last three years he developed a database for the ancient astronaut theory. But this new CD-ROM is quite different - it is the first comprehensive encyclopedia of Erich von Daniken's theories. This German-language edition of the CD-ROM runs on IBM and IBM Compatible PC's, as well as on Macintosh Computers. In a compact multi-media mix of pictures, movies, sound, spoken and written text this CD-ROM contains:

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The computer will lead you first into the cockpit of a spaceship; use their terminals, looking like weightless bubbles.You will be able to open the door to the "library of the gods." If you are unsure, or if you need help - just call Erich von Daniken. He will appear on the screen and give you directional hints. This is a completely new way of searching and of combining indications and comparing facts. You can follow Erich von Daniken on his expeditions and maybe you will come to startling new conclusions. Once you start using this CD-ROM, you won't be able to stop!

The CD-ROM will be first presented to the world at the Ancient Astronaut Society's World Conference to be held in Bern,Switzerland on August 18-19,1995. The new CD-ROM is now available(in German only)from Ancient Astronaut Society, Book and Video Service, Brünnestr. 104, CH-3018 Bern, Switzerland. The price is US$90, which includes a description, 3-D glasses, autographs of the authors and all postage and handling charges.

[Ed.Note: The CD-ROM may possibly be produced in an English version if there is enough demand. If you would be interested in obtaining one, write to the Society Headquarters, or FAX 708-295-0868.]